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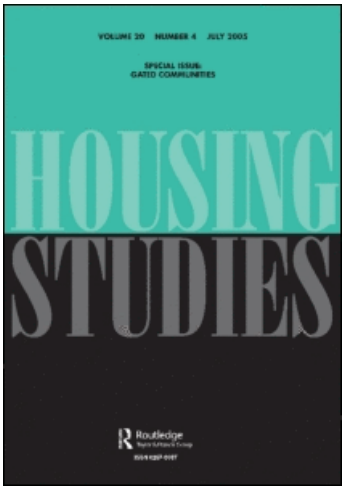

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Local Social Networks and Social Resources in Two Dutch Neighbourhoods

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ABSTRACT *Much research in neighbour relations is inspired by two research questions. First, it is necessary to know to which degree social contacts are local and in particular whether local social contacts in disadvantaged neighbourhoods bear an instrumental disadvantage. Second, it is necessary to know whether policies aiming at mixing people from different social and ethnic backgrounds result in more diverse networks and therefore in better opportunities for low-income residents. To address these questions, this paper compares the role of local relationships and the social resources they provide in a low-income neighbourhood and a socio-economic mixed neighbourhood in the Netherlands. Contrary to assumptions in the research literature, residents in the low-income neighbourhood do not differ from their counterparts in the mixed neighbourhood in the degree to which they receive social support for dealing with everyday problems. However, networks of low-income residents provided fewer resources in terms of accessed prestige.*

KEY WORDS: Social housing, neighbourhoods, housing policy, social networks, social resources neighbourhood effects

Introduction

The undesirable consequences of concentrated poverty are a recurring topic in the political debate on low-income neighbourhoods in the Netherlands as well as in many other Western European countries and in the US. Recently, the Dutch Ministry of the Interior has expressed strong concerns about segregation in the larger cities:

> While the physical and economic infrastructure [of cities] has shown a strong improvement in recent years, the urban social structure continues to be confronted with a concentration of low-income households, exclusion, non-participation, health problems, safety issues, and non-integration. (Ministerie van BZK, 2004, p. 17)

The debate about disadvantaged neighbourhoods centres on the question of how segregation inhibits integration and how living in an area of concentrated poverty

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exacerbates the already marginalised position of poor, low educated and/or minority residents (Musterd, 2003). Although empirical evidence for such neighbourhood effects is relatively scarce and inconclusive in the European context (Galster, 2007), these concerns have nevertheless contributed to policies of social mixing. In Dutch low-income neighbourhoods renewal programmes replace social housing with more upscale rental and owner-occupied housing in order to attract more affluent residents.

Mirroring the attention in policy practice for social mixing, the consequences of living in low-income neighbourhoods have also been the focus of much research. Neighbourhood researchers study the association between neighbourhood characteristics, such as the degree of ethnic and income mix, and individual outcomes such as employment and social mobility, level of educational attainment of children, teenage pregnancies and criminal behaviour, whereby higher levels of neighbourhood disadvantage are often found to be related to unfavourable social outcomes (Friedrichs *et al.*, 2003; Galster, 2003; Sampson *et al.*, 2002; Small & Newman, 2001). One explanation for this relationship focuses on the social context of low-income neighbourhoods and the negative influence of neighbour relations. Although it is widely recognised that people's activity patterns and their social life generally exceed the neighbourhood level (Schnell & Yoav, 2001), it has also been shown that this is less the case for unskilled, low-income and minority residents (Fischer, 1982). Consequently, the 'limited resource' or 'social isolation' hypothesis for neighbourhood effects assumes that the social networks of residents in low-income neighbourhoods are particularly local oriented and lack useful social resources to improve their lives (Wilson, 1987). This paper builds upon this argument by studying the social relationships of people who reside in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

The paper uses survey data from a case study in The Hague, the Netherlands to compare the degree to which social resources are provided through local relationships. The interviews were conducted with social housing residents in the low-income neighbourhood Transvaal-Noord and the socio-economically mixed neighbourhood Regentesse. A Dutch case study on local social networks can provide an interesting perspective on the question of how severe neighbourhood conditions need to be to trigger processes of social isolation. Many neighbourhood studies are driven by the assumption that the relatively heterogeneous population composition in low-income neighbourhoods in European cities and the living conditions in these neighbourhoods might not reach the necessary thresholds of concentrated poverty to evoke processes such as social isolation (Musterd *et al.*, 2006). This argument is thought to be particularly relevant for social welfare states such as the Netherlands (Musterd & De Vos, 2007; Ostendorf *et al.*, 2001): levels of socio-economic and ethnic segregation in Dutch cities have been traditionally low as a result of a large supply of affordable social housing, extensive redistribution programmes of the welfare state and active involvement of the central and local government in low-income neighbourhoods. Indeed, while the case of Transvaal-Noord represents an extreme case of concentrated poverty in the Netherlands, it constitutes a mild case from an international perspective and it is therefore debatable whether social isolation might occur.

How Neighbourhoods Influence Social Resources

Social relations form an important source of information and social support (Coleman, 1988; Granovetter, 1995; Lin, 1999). Who we know determines what type of social

resources are available to us to shape, change and improve our lives. Some relations help us to get by and cope with everyday problems, by babysitting our children or lending money to pay the rent. Others are more useful to 'get ahead' in life by providing information and new opportunities and connecting us to formal institutions or structures, such as the housing or labour market. This is also referred to as the distinction between expressive social resources and instrumental social resources (Lin, 2001; Wellman, 1992). Expressive resources confirm social positions and are generally more abundant than the instrumental resources that are thought to facilitate upward social mobility (Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005). This is related to the fact that expressive resources are generally provided by family and friends from similar backgrounds with access to similar information, while instrumental resources are provided by people with different backgrounds who have access to different information and institutions. Often, similar ties are strong, while dissimilar ties are weak (Granovetter, 1973). A more diverse or heterogeneous personal network with more weak ties is thought to provide better instrumental resources or 'bridging' social capital than a homogeneous personal network dominated by strong ties that provide 'bonding' capital (Gittell & Vidal, 2005; Halpern, 2005; Portes, 2000; Putnam, 2000, 2004). In the case of low-income families, a social network existing of network members of similar socio-economic background is therefore expected to bear an instrumental disadvantage.

Researchers who study neighbourhoods and the effects of neighbourhood characteristics on individual networks and individual well-being often argue that the population composition of the neighbourhood influences the degree to which personal social networks are homogeneous or more diverse and thereby the resources available to residents to improve their social position. The neighbourhood is viewed as a potential place of interaction where one meets potential network members: the social composition of this meeting place thereby shapes the resulting personal network (Feld, 1981; Verbrugge, 1979; Völker & Flap, 2007; Wellman, 1996). This restriction to the locale is in particular assumed for low-income residents who are expected to be more locally oriented in their social contacts, because of their lack in financial or material resources, e.g. to cover larger distances (Briggs, 1997; Dawkins, 2006; Kleit, 2001; MacDonald *et al.*, 2005; Sampson *et al.*, 2002; Small & Newman, 2001; Small, 2007; Tigges *et al.*, 1998). If low-income residents also live in a low-income neighbourhood, this will, consequently, negatively influence the degree to which these residents have access to the different types of resources. This is the 'limited resource' or 'social isolation' hypothesis (Wilson, 1987). In simple terms, it is hypothesised that homogeneous low-income neighbourhoods lead to homogeneous social networks of residents which in particular lack 'useful' instrumental resources for climbing up the social ladder. Consequently, low-income residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are expected to be worse off than their counterparts in more mixed neighbourhoods. While local contacts of the former are limited to other low-income dwellers, the latter have access to contacts of higher socio-economic positions. Therefore, for residents in a low-income neighbourhood, it can be said that they lack the useful contacts with more affluent and better educated neighbours, even though they might receive various forms of personal support from their neighbours. In contrast, the networks of low-income residents in more mixed or affluent neighbourhoods are expected to be more diverse, providing the instrumental resources that facilitate social mobility.

While these ideas have been dominant in shaping policy measures, questions can be raised about the actual importance of neighbourhood contacts for low-income residents

and the nature of these contacts. Several studies raise doubts about the benefits of social mixing because they have found little evidence in heterogeneous neighbourhoods for interaction between residents of different backgrounds (Clampet-Lundquist, 2004; Kleit, 2005; Schnell & Yoav, 2001): although the neighbourhood composition was mixed with regard to the social and economic background of residents, on a micro level of personal interactions little mixing was found. Residents mainly interacted with neighbours who were similar to themselves. This might be explained by the fact that people generally prefer to interact with those of similar backgrounds, such as education, occupational status, age and ethnicity (Fischer, 1977; Verbrugge, 1977).

Similar evidence for limited interaction between residents of different backgrounds in mixed neighbourhoods has been found in the context of the Netherlands. In newly restructured neighbourhoods, most affluent newcomers have socio-spatial action patterns that transcend the neighbourhood and they do not really identify themselves as being part of a neighbourhood community (for example, Duyvendak *et al.*, 2000; Van Beckhoven & Van Kempen, 2003). In most cases, however, the aim of these studies is to evaluate changes in the community in a given neighbourhood as well as in the perceived social cohesion amongst residents, rather than changes in actual relations amongst neighbours and in the personal networks of residents. Unfortunately, no insight is provided in how renewal programmes focused on diversifying the housing stock and the resulting influx of more affluent residents have improved or worsened the resources and opportunities available to the remaining residents.

Another group of researchers focuses on the nature of neighbourhood relations in mixed neighbourhoods rather than only on the degree to which residents interact. They ask whether the benefits for low-income residents of living in a mixed neighbourhood are not overestimated. Briggs (1997), for example, points to possible negative effects of mixing in terms of a loss of social support:

> For decades, researchers have pointed to the importance of ethnic and other ties in creating networks of social support, which often depend on close contacts with similarly situated individuals ... In some new neighbourhood contexts, housing mobility programmes may actually leave the poor with less of this social support dimension of social capital—the kinds of resources that help individuals and families get by or cope with chronic poverty. The same programmes may leave the same people with more of other types of social capital, including 'social leverage'—social resources that help change people's life chances or help them get ahead. (p. 202)

The question then is whether the benefits of social mixing through urban renewal outweigh the drawbacks of forcing people to move away from their support network. The argument is that living in a homogeneous neighbourhood might provide the type of social resources that form a springboard for residents to improve their social positions, for example, in the case of ethnic communities (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Portes, 2000). Low-income residents in mixed neighbourhoods might miss these types of social resources.

Finally, some researchers reject the view on neighbourhood contacts as an asset, at least for low-income neighbourhoods. Rather, they interpret neighbourhood relations in low-income neighbourhoods in a negative way and state that residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods are less likely to interact or trust each other than residents in more affluent neighbourhoods due to crime and other forms of neighbourhood disorder (Ross *et al.*, 2001;

Sampson *et al.*, 2002). This perspective on social life in disadvantaged neighbourhoods offers the bleakest hypothesis about access to social resources: living isolated not only from mainstream society but also from each other, residents lack any kind of support.

To summarise, there are competing hypotheses about the role of neighbourhoods in influencing the structure (homogeneous/heterogeneous) and type of social resources (expressive/instrumental) in networks available to low-income residents. However, there is little empirical evidence to support or reject these hypotheses in the context of the Netherlands, as well as elsewhere. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to compare the personal social networks of residents in the social housing sector in two urban neighbourhoods in their degree of local orientation, socio-economic structure and support. The following research questions will be addressed:

(1) To what degree are personal social networks of social housing residents in a low-income neighbourhood and a mixed neighbourhood locally oriented?
(2) How do the social networks of social housing residents in the two neighbourhoods differ in terms of socio-economic prestige, the importance of family ties and ethnic composition?
(3) Do social housing residents in the two neighbourhoods differ in the amount of social support provided via their network?

Research Design

To address these research questions a case study was conducted in two neighbourhoods in The Hague, the Netherlands. The Hague shows the highest level of residential segregation in the Netherlands and income segregation has increased over a period of six years, despite a decline in low-income residents overall (SCP & CBS, 2003). Within this urban context, two research areas were selected with different levels of socio-economic mix. Both neighbourhoods are centrally located and were built in the late 19th century. The first neighbourhood can be viewed as an 'extreme' case: the low-income neighbourhood of Transvaal-Noord is one of the most marginalised neighbourhoods in the city. The proportion of households with an income below the poverty line is more than twice the city average and unemployment is high. The adjacent neighbourhood of Regentessekwartier was selected based on the fact that this is one of the few socio-economically mixed neighbourhoods in the city. The proportion of households below the poverty line and the level of unemployment reflect the city average. Table 1 reports the demographics of the two research areas.

It should be noted that while the low-income neighbourhood is considered an extreme case in the Dutch context, the proportion of households below the poverty line is still only one-third of all households in the neighbourhood.

In these neighbourhoods, a survey was performed amongst social housing residents between the age of 18 and 65. As the selection of residents on the basis of income is rather problematic—data on personal incomes at the individual level are unavailable and a selection question about personal income at the beginning of an interview is rather awkward—residents were selected on the basis of living in social housing. Respondents were randomly selected from an address database provided by the local government of all social housing units in the two neighbourhoods. In view of the relatively large proportion of low-educated and minority residents, 399 questionnaires were collected face-to-face

Table 1. Demographics of research area

	Transvaal (Low income)	Regentesse (Mixed)
Residents (*n*)	4350	5030
Social housing (%)	76	27
Share of families with income below poverty line, of which:	33	18
On unemployment benefits	53	45
Share of families with income in highest income group (top 20%)	5	14
Average annual disposable income (per person in euros)	8300	12 300
Working population without job (%)	50	26
Household structure (%):		
Single	44	52
Family, no children	19	24
Family with children	37	26
Non-Dutch (%), of which:	88	54
Surinamese	18	26
Turkish	24	6
Moroccan	16	6
Immigrant non-developed country	19	13
Immigrant developed country	3	11

Source: Statistics Netherlands (2004).

by interviewers of different, and where possible matching, ethnic backgrounds. To gather information about residents' social networks, the survey used a combination of methods. The questionnaire included some general questions about the residential location of respondents' family and friends. Because neighbourhoods are not "neatly segregated geographical spaces" (Sayer, 2000, p. 114) and are experienced differently by different residents, it was left to the subjective perception of residents whether network members lived 'in the neighbourhood'.

In addition, two individual social capital methods, the position generator method and the resource generator method, were used to collect more detailed information about the resources in, and locality of, residents' networks. These individual social capital measures were partially adapted from the Social Survey of the Networks of the Dutch (SSND, see Völker & Flap, 2002). The first method, the position generator, provides insight into the degree to which respondents potentially have access to social resources by measuring the different occupational positions of their network members (Lin & Dumin, 1986; Lin, 2001). The assumption behind this measurement instrument is that network members with a higher job prestige can give access to better instrumental resources that are needed to improve their social position, such as finding a job. For disadvantaged residents, such relations with people in prestige-rich positions might thus act as bridging or weak ties. To measure the prestige of respondents' social networks, they were shown a list of 22 occupations, ranging from domestic work to being a judge. If they knew anyone with such a job, they were asked the ethnic background of network members, whether they lived in the neighbourhood and the nature of the relationship (family, extended family or friends and acquaintances; in contrast to other studies the categories of friends and acquaintances were combined, because this distinction was not made and understood by respondents). For each occupation or position a prestige score was calculated based on standardised codes for occupations of the Central Bureau of Statistics. These scores were

used to create four indicators for socio-economic diversity: the percentage of occupations known, the range in accessed prestige calculated as the difference between the highest position and the lowest position, the prestige score of the network member with the highest occupational position and an average prestige indicator.

The second measurement instrument for social resources, the resource generator, (Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005) determines the degree to which residents receive various forms of social support in their daily lives from others in their social network. Questions about practical support in the personal or home domain (i.e. helping out with the groceries if someone is sick or giving advice in the case of family problems at home) provide information about residents' access to expressive resources. Questions about support in dealing with formal or political institutions, financial support and support with regard to work are used to measure instrumental resources. In this survey, respondents were shown a list of 11 examples of personal and increased support. They were asked whether anyone in their surroundings could provide such support, and if so, what their relationship was and whether this person lived in the neighbourhood.

Finally, the survey included questions about respondents' residential history, their reasons for moving to the neighbourhood, the degree to which they were satisfied with the neighbourhood and their wish to move. These questions were raised to give some insight into the degree to which residential selection mechanisms might be related to local social networks. A danger in comparative studies is "to mistake neighbourhood or other effects for selection effects with a group of 'upwardly mobile poor' who differ by internal position or motivation to succeed" (Briggs, 1998, p. 196). The question is thus whether potentially different outcomes in the location, structure and resources of residents' networks can be attributed to differences in residential context rather than solely to compositional differences of the two neighbourhood groups. To address the issue of selection, further differences between the two neighbourhood groups will be analysed whilst controlling for individual characteristics of residents such as ethnic background or level of education. Nevertheless, the issue of selection remains a methodological caveat (Galster, 2008).

Research Population

In both neighbourhoods, the respondents scored lower in terms of level of education and employment than the neighbourhood average and belonged more often to an ethnic minority (see Table 2). This is expected considering the selection of respondents in the social housing sector and their relatively low socio-economic positions compared to residents in the owner-occupied or private rental sector in these neighbourhoods. The two groups of residents differ in some aspects: social housing residents in the low-income neighbourhood of Transvaal are more often unemployed than their counterparts in the mixed neighbourhood of Regentesse and the level of education is somewhat lower. The ethnic composition of the two neighbourhood populations differs greatly in that residents in Transvaal are more often from minority backgrounds and of different ethnic backgrounds. At the same time, the two neighbourhood groups do not differ in terms of migration history, age or sex.

With respect to their residential history and intentions to move, no differences were found between the two neighbourhood groups. More than one-third of the respondents indicated that the move to their current neighbourhood was a conscious choice and one in every three residents had family or acquaintances living in the neighbourhood before they

Table 2. Respondents' demographics by neighbourhood ($n = 399$)

	Transvaal (Low income)	Regentesse (Mixed income)
Age (mean in years)	41	42
Education (%):		
Less than high school	31	22
High school (<4 years)	25	26
High school (>4 years)	28	33
University/professional training	16	20
Employed (%)	36	46
Occupational prestige (current or last job in %):		
Low	70	56
Middle	23	32
High	7	12
Household structure (%):		
Single	26	36
Family, no children	16	15
Family with children	55	44
Other	3	5
Non-Dutch (%), of which:	95	68
Surinamese	34	32
Turkish	28	13
Moroccan	20	19
Immigrant non-developed country	16	14
Immigrant developed country	2	14
First generation (imm. as adult)	54	56
First generation (imm. as child)	28	26
Second generation	18	18

moved there. In the low-income neighbourhood of Transvaal, family relations were more important, while in the mixed neighbourhood of Regentesse friends and acquaintances were more important. The average length of residence is similar in both neighbourhoods, which is unexpected in view of the fact that one might expect the low-income neighbourhood to be more of a transition neighbourhood or at least a neighbourhood that people want to leave, if possible. This does not seem to be the case. In fact, three out of four of the residents in Transvaal feel at home in the neighbourhood. In addition, the proportion of residents who want to move does not differ between the neighbourhoods, although residents from Transvaal more often want to leave the area.

Local Social Networks

Respondents were asked to what degree their family, friends and acquaintances lived within their own neighbourhood. Results indicate that social housing residents in both neighbourhoods are to a considerable degree locally oriented in their social contacts: one out of four residents indicates that the majority of their family lives in their own neighbourhood and one in every three residents indicates that the majority of their friends and acquaintances live within the neighbourhood. Thus, the neighbourhood can be regarded as a very important place for social interaction. Further analyses show that residents in the two neighbourhoods show remarkably similar degrees of local orientation in their social networks, despite the differences in their educational and social backgrounds (see Table 3).

Table 3. OLS Regression analysis for degree of neighbourhood orientation of social network (standardised coefficients)

	Family members	Friends and acquaintances
Sex (ref = male)	0.035	−0.022
Age	−0.144**	−0.109
Education (ref = low):		
Middle	−0.017	−0.006
High	−0.092	−0.051
Employed	−0.005	−0.011
Ethnic minority (ref = Dutch):		
Surinamese	0.192**	−0.018
Moroccan	0.191**	−0.006
Turkish	0.276***	0.094
Other Western immigrants	0.052	0.018
Other non-Western immigrants	0.014	−0.018
Family with children	−0.100	−0.004
Low-income neighbourhood (Transvaal)	−0.031	0.053
Years in neighbourhood	0.149**	0.154***
Model summary		
R2	0.113	0.049
n	319	330

Statistically significant: ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$.

Several other factors determine the degree to which residents are locally oriented in their social networks. In the case of family networks, residents of Surinamese, Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds are considerably more neighbourhood-oriented than Dutch and other minority residents. Younger residents are more neighbourhood-oriented than older residents, which probably relates to the fact that younger residents are often second generation immigrants who grew up in the neighbourhood. Also of importance is how long a person has lived in the neighbourhood. Finally, families with children are slightly less neighbourhood-oriented than other households. Gender, employment and level of education, on the other hand, do not influence the degree of neighbourhood orientation. In contrast, the proportion of friends and acquaintances in the neighbourhood is much less easy to predict on the basis of individual characteristics such as age or ethnicity. Only the number of years that residents have resided in the neighbourhood is positively related to a more localised network.

These findings indicate that the social networks of social housing residents in both the low-income and the mixed neighbourhood are considerably locally oriented. However, it does not provide insight into the question of who these neighbourhood contacts are and to what degree they provide social resources. The next steps in the analysis therefore look at respondents' potential access to instrumental resources based on the socio-economic prestige in their networks and the degree to which they actually receive various forms of social support.

Socio-economic Prestige

The socio-economic pattern of residents' social networks was measured using a position generator method, as described previously, as an indicator for respondents' potential access to instrumental resources. The findings are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Socio-economic prestige in residents' networks in % ($n = 394$)

	Transvaal (Low income)	Regentesse (Mixed)	All
Socio-economic prestige:			
Percentage of occupations known	20	25***	22
Range in prestige (diversity)	39	42	40
Highest prestige	68	71	69
Average prestige	46	47	47
Percentage of accessed positions through neighbour relations	52	38***	46
Type of relationship:			
Family	32	29	31
Extended family	33	21***	27
Friends/acquaintances	36	50***	42
Ethnic diversity (incl. family relations):			
Same ethnic background as respondent	84	81	83
Other ethnic background than respondent, but also minority	10	10	10
Other ethnic background than respondent, Dutch	6	9	7
Ethnic diversity (excl. family relations):			
Same ethnic background as respondent	58	54	56
Other ethnic background than respondent, but also minority	31	36	34
Other ethnic background than respondent, Dutch	11	10	11

Difference between neighbourhoods statistically significant: ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$.

On average, the respondents know only approximately 22 per cent of the possible occupations, which is low compared to what is known from the Dutch population (49 per cent, see Van der Gaag, 2004). There is some difference between the two neighbourhoods in terms of this indicator for socio-economic prestige: residents in the mixed neighbourhood know slightly more people than the residents in the low-income neighbourhood. This suggests that there is a small, but statistically significant difference in network size. However, there is little difference in terms of the highest position accessed, the range of occupations known or the average prestige of the positions accessed. In other words, social housing residents in the mixed neighbourhood of Regentesse are acquainted with a slightly larger variety of occupations, but these are not occupations with a higher prestige status.

Table 4 also provides some more insight into the structure of residents' networks. In terms of neighbourhood orientation, almost half of all occupations are accessed through network members that live in the same neighbourhood as the respondent. A difference was found between the two neighbourhood groups: social housing residents in the low-income neighbourhood of Transvaal are considerably more neighbourhood-oriented than residents in Regentesse as far as their accessed prestige is concerned. In terms of the nature of the relations, strong ties are more dominant than weak ties: 60 per cent of all network members are family rather than friends or acquaintances. Residents in the low-income

neighbourhood refer to family relations more frequently, of which a considerable proportion is extended family, compared to residents in the mixed neighbourhood. Finally, in terms of ethnicity, the dominance of the own ethnic group in residents' networks and the small proportion of Dutch network members is striking: more than half of the non-family ties have the same ethnic background as the respondents and the majority of them are other ethnic minorities. If kinship ties are included, 84 per cent of residents' social network is of similar ethnic background as the respondent. No statistically significant differences were found between the two neighbourhoods.

Social Support

Another method of gaining information about respondents' access to social resources is to measure the degree to which they receive various forms of social support, using the resource generator as described above. As shown in Table 5, in terms of access to social support, the social housing residents indicate that they know someone in 63 per cent of cases. These scores are relatively low compared to the findings of the Survey of Social Networks of the Dutch (71 per cent, see Van der Gaag, 2004). There is also considerable variation between the items concerned with how often residents have access to specific forms of support. In general, personal support seems more abundant than increased support. Indeed, the lowest scores are found for the most concrete examples of increased support: providing a summer job for a family member (38 per cent), borrowing money (42 per cent) or helping or advising on finding a job (49 per cent). No statistically significant differences were found between the two neighbourhoods in terms of either personal or increased support, which contradicts the assumptions in the research literature.

While there are no differences between the two neighbourhoods in terms of received support, differences exist in the type of network members providing social support. First, kinship ties form the most important source of support: more than half of all support is provided by family members, mostly by direct family (parents, siblings or children) but

Table 5. Social support in residents' networks in % ($n = 376$)

	Transvaal (Low income)	Regentesse (Mixed income)	All
% of social support:	61	63	62
Personal support	73	78	75
Work support	50	48	49
Information and financial support	57	58	57
Support through neighbourhood contacts:	66	58**	62
Personal support	71	64**	68
Work support	61	47***	54
Information and financial support	64	57	61
Support provided by:			
Family	46	43	45
Extended family	13	8**	11
Friends/acquaintances	32	36	34
Co-workers	2	2	2
Professionals	7	10	9

Difference between neighbourhoods statistically significant: ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$.

also by more extended family (cousins, aunts and uncles). Friendship ties are another important source of support, while the role of co-workers or professionals is minimal. Again, there is considerable variation in these findings for different forms of social support (data not shown): two-thirds of the expressive resources are provided by family in contrast to half of all information and financial support and less than half of the work-related support. For these forms of support respondents rely more on professional help. There is also some variation between the two neighbourhoods: network members in the low-income neighbourhood context are more often family relations than in the mixed neighbourhood context, in particular due to the role of extended family in Transvaal.

In terms of location, contacts in the neighbourhood form an important role in residents' support networks: 62 per cent of the network members who provide some form of support live in the same neighbourhood as the respondent. However, there is considerable difference in the type of support that neighbourhood relations provide: support in the personal domain is more often provided by network members living in the neighbourhood than other forms of support, in particular work-related support. Moreover, there is considerable difference between the two neighbourhoods in the proportion of neighbourhood contacts in their support network: in the low-income neighbourhood 66 per cent of all contacts live in the neighbourhood against 58 per cent in the mixed neighbourhood. The contrast between neighbourhoods is greatest with regard to work-related support. Thus, at a first look while residents did not differ in the general orientation of their networks (see previous paragraph), they differ with respect to the residential location of those network members who are most important to them.

Residential Context and Neighbourhood Orientation

In the previous paragraph, a picture emerges of rather homogeneous social networks considerably oriented at the neighbourhood, particularly amongst social housing residents in the low-income neighbourhood. Of obvious interest to this study is the question of whether these differences in neighbourhood orientation in terms of socio-economic prestige and actual support remain after controlling for differences in population composition.

To gain more insight into the differences between the neighbourhoods in the degree to which socio-economic prestige is neighbourhood-based, a multivariate regression model was estimated (see Table 6, model 1) including both personal characteristics alone and residential location.

The strongest effects on neighbourhood-based prestige were found for education and ethnicity: compared to respondents with a low education, residents with a medium and a higher education are less locally oriented in their networks in terms of accessed prestige. Compared to Dutch respondents, residents of Moroccan and Turkish background are more locally oriented. Other characteristics, such as gender, having children, being employed, age and years of residence in the neighbourhood do not have an effect on the proportion of network members in the neighbourhood. Note that after controlling for these personal characteristics, a relationship remains between neighbourhood context and the degree to which socio-economic prestige is neighbourhood based, albeit statistically significant only at the 0.10 level. For residents in the low-income neighbourhood of Transvaal network, prestige is more locally provided than for residents in Regentesse, the mixed neighbourhood.

Table 6. OLS Regression analysis for degree of neighbourhood orientation of a person's resources (standardised coefficients)

	Model 1 Position generator	Model 2 Resource generator (personal support)	Model 3 Resource generator (work support)
Sex (ref = male)	0.035	−0.151**	−0.005
Age	−0.174	−0.209***	−0.095
Education (ref = low):			
Middle	−0.125**	0.064	0.073
High	−0.150**	−0.067	0.067
Employed	0.040	−0.062	−0.160**
Ethnic minority (ref = Dutch):			
Surinamese	0.072	0.159**	−0.027
Moroccan	0.150**	0.074	0.108
Turkish	0.140*	0.182**	−0.043
Other Western immigrants	−0.111*	0.038	−0.064
Other non-Western immigrants	0.097	0.003	0.579
Family with children	−0.074	0.096	0.017
Low-income neighbourhood (Transvaal)	0.117*	0.018	0.160**
Years in neighbourhood	0.059	0.117*	0.174**
Model summary			
R2	0.125	0.116	0.113
n	300	297	182

Statistical significance: ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$.

In addition, Table 6 includes two multivariate regression models for the differences found in neighbourhood orientation in personal support (model 2) and work-related support (model 3) to discover whether these differences can be explained by personal characteristics or also by residential location. First, in the case of social support in the personal domain, neighbourhood orientation is related to various personal characteristics, such as age (negative) and gender (negative for women). Surinamese and Turkish residents are more neighbourhood-oriented than other ethnic groups and the longer one has lived in the neighbourhood, the higher the proportion of support provided by neighbourhood relations. When controlled for these personal characteristics, neighbourhood context is no longer a factor of influence in the degree to which neighbourhood contacts are an important source of social support. In other words, the differences in neighbourhood orientation in terms of personal support between the two neighbourhoods can be largely explained by differences in population composition. In contrast, in the case of work-related support, neighbourhood context remains a factor of influence in terms of the degree of neighbourhood orientation with regard to work ($p < 0.10$): respondents in the low-income neighbourhood are considerably more neighbourhood-oriented in terms of work-related support than respondents in the socio-economically mixed neighbourhood. This mirrors previous findings reported in a qualitative study on informal job networks in the neighbourhood of Transvaal (Pinkster, 2007). Other influencing factors are the number of years of residence (positive) and whether respondents work themselves (negative).

In short, differences between the residents in the two neighbourhoods in neighbourhood orientation of socio-economic prestige and work-related support, which can be considered as indicators of potential instrumental resources, remain after controlling for personal characteristics. The opposite has been shown for the degree to which one receives social support in the personal domain: differences in neighbourhood orientation between the two neighbourhoods of expressive resources are an expression of differences in personal characteristics.

Neighbourhood Orientation and Social Resources

The next question is to what degree a relationship exists between the degree of neighbourhood orientation and the amount of accessed prestige and support. A multivariate regression model was estimated, which included neighbourhood context and neighbourhood orientation as well as personal characteristics and other network characteristics, to explain the level of prestige and support in residents' networks. Table 7 summarises the findings.

With regard to socio-economic prestige of residents' networks, the level of education of respondents shows a positive correlation with the socio-economic structure of their social network. Ethnic differences, on the other hand, do not matter, with the exception of the very heterogeneous group of non-Western immigrants. A possible explanation for this might be that this is a very diverse group of immigrants, many of whom have only recently

Table 7. OLS Regression on socio-economic prestige (percentage of occupations known) and support in residents' network (standardised coefficients)

	Model 1 Prestige	Model 2 Support
Sex (ref = male)	0.045	−0.024
Age	0.026	−0.197***
Education (ref = low)		
Middle	0.279***	0.019
High	0.193***	0.097
Employed	0.060	0.079
Ethnic minority (ref = Dutch)		
Surinamese	−0.102	−0.064
Moroccan	−0.034	−0.073
Turkish	0.066	0.039
Other Western immigrants	−0.020	−0.047
Other non-Western immigrants	−0.218***	−0.122
Family with children	−0.006	−0.060
Network characteristics:		
% neighbourhood contacts	0.006	0.085
% family relations	−0.164***	0.045
% own ethnic group	−0.089	–[a]
Residential:		
Low-income neighbourhood (Transvaal)	−0.121**	0.003
Model summary		
R2	0.219	0.094
n	299	308

Statistical significance: ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$. [a] not measured for resource items.

immigrated and therefore not had time to develop a very large social network. Of the network characteristics, only the proportion of friends and acquaintances versus the proportion of family as network members is positively related to the socio-economic prestige of respondents' networks. The proportion of neighbourhood contacts, on the other hand, does not have an influence and the earlier mentioned bivariate relationship between proportion of neighbourhood contacts and prestige of a person's network can be largely explained by differences in the population, particularly ethnic, composition of the two neighbourhoods. A final and interesting finding is that respondents in the low-income neighbourhood score significantly lower on socio-economic prestige than respondents in the more mixed neighbourhood, even when controlling for the proportion of neighbourhood based contacts and proportion of family ties. It should be noted that this finding does not imply that these lower resources are all provided through local contacts.

In contrast, the findings for the amount of social support do not differ between the two neighbourhoods, nor does a multivariate analysis provide further explanation for the proportion of support that residents receive (see Table 7, model 2). Neither living in a low-income neighbourhood, nor a high proportion of neighbourhood based support contacts influence the degree of support. This remains the case when analysing the results for the three types of social support separately.

Summary and Discussion

An important discussion in the research literature about the role of neighbour relations in transmitting neighbourhood effects is whether low-income residents in low-income neighbourhoods are worse off than low-income residents in mixed neighbourhoods because they lack useful social resources to improve their disadvantaged social position. The dominant assumption in this debate is that while social interaction patterns in low-income neighbourhoods reproduce social inequalities, they facilitate mobility in mixed neighbourhoods. The aim of this paper was to study the degree to which social housing residents in a low-income neighbourhood and a socio-economic mixed neighbourhood in The Hague, the Netherlands, differed in the availability of social resources, in particular in their access to different social positions and in actual support provided by their social network. In addition, the paper examined whether any differences found can be attributed to local contacts. To study the relationship between neighbourhood and access to social resources, two different indicators were used for individual social capital: a measure of support and a measure of socio-economic prestige. The former measure is an indicator for daily and practical support while the latter indicates potential instrumental access to resources that are needed to improve a person's social position. Interestingly, different results were found for the two measures.

On the one hand, the two resident groups differ in socio-economic prestige of their networks in terms of the proportion of positions known. On this indicator for socio-economic diversity, social housing residents in the low-income neighbourhood of Transvaal score lower than respondents in the mixed neighbourhood of Regentesse. However, no differences were found in terms of knowing people with higher prestige positions: the greater proportion of accessed positions in the networks of respondents in Regentesse is the result of knowing people with more diverse jobs in the lower ranges of occupational structure rather than people with a higher job status. This means that social housing residents in the mixed neighbourhood of Regentesse do not benefit from the

proximity of more affluent neighbours. It is possible that this is the result of considerable social distance between residents and social closure of networks of more affluent residents, although further research would be needed to test this hypothesis. The difference between the two neighbourhoods in the number of occupational positions known remains stable in a multivariate analysis, where there was control for personal characteristics as well as for network characteristics. This also applies to the degree of neighbourhood orientation of residents' networks: social networks of residents in the low-income neighbourhood are more constricted in terms of socio-economic prestige, but this is not simply related to the higher proportion of local social contacts in their networks. An explanation for the remaining neighbourhood effect on socio-economic prestige might lie in the nature of local social contacts relating to social closure or processes of socialisation or stigmatisation of Transvaal residents, but a more in-depth inquiry of these processes is beyond the scope of this paper.

On the other hand, the two resident groups do not differ in terms of actual support provided by their networks and their ability to find people to deal with the problems of everyday life, whether these problems are in the personal domain, work-related or related to dealing with formal institutions such as the housing and labour market. It appears that receiving support is not related to a person's status or capability, but more to the availability of others. Thus, contrary to the general assumption in the research literature, living in a mixed neighbourhood or a low-income neighbourhood does not matter for the degree to which residents receive actual support. However, it should be noted that both groups score rather low compared to the Dutch population in general. In addition, there is a difference between the two neighbourhoods in the degree to which support is provided by the local network: for social housing residents in the low-income neighbourhood, family and friends more frequently live in the same neighbourhood than for their counterparts in the mixed neighbourhood. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that this does not affect the degree of support received.

A final question that can be raised is how the dissimilar findings for the two individual social capital measures should be interpreted. The position and resource generator measure social resources in respondents' networks that serve different goals and that are not necessarily provided by the same people. Thus the different types of resources complement each other. In fact, it can be hypothesised that the socio-economic prestige in residents' networks as measured by the position generator is an indication of the usefulness or effectiveness of social support measured by the resource generator. Following this line of thought, the more diverse networks of residents in the mixed neighbourhood of Regentesse might provide more effective support to deal with problems in everyday life. For example, knowing people with more diverse occupational positions may be more beneficial to maintain a person's social position (if not improve their social position) because they can tap into more diverse sources of job information, even though these positions might all be at the lower end of the social rank. On the other hand, there is a considerable difference between knowing someone and actually benefiting from this relationship. From this perspective, residents in the mixed neighbourhood might know more people, but they might not be capable of deriving actual useful support from these contacts. In simple terms, the question is whether it matters that a person knows a truck driver as well as a cleaning person rather than only a truck driver. Further research on the way in which network prestige is used in different domains of residents' life would provide more insight into this issue.

In short, the findings for socio-economic prestige in residents' networks show that disadvantaged residents in low-income neighbourhoods are slightly worse off in terms of network diversity than disadvantaged residents in mixed neighbourhoods, while they do not differ in terms of social support. Thus, residents in the low-income neighbourhood are socially isolated in terms of access to prestige, but not in terms of actual support. Although neighbourhood context plays only a moderate role in influencing socio-economic prestige compared to individual characteristics, such as level of education and ethnicity, it is nevertheless interesting from an international perspective that such mild forms of social isolation occur even in relatively fragmented and heterogeneous low-income neighbourhoods such as Transvaal-Noord.

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